

WHY FOSTER CHILDREN NEED HOUSE BILL 6499

House of Providence is a child caring institution that is licensed by the Department of Child Welfare Licensing and contracted as a Mental Health and Behavioral Stabilization program with the Department of Health and Human Services. We provide a very unconventional continuum of care that is yielding unprecedented results in the state of Michigan. We are seeing data that shows upwards of a 90% success rate. In that success rate, we are seeing some of the most difficult to place foster youth find stability, permanency with placements, internal regulation, healing in a trauma informed setting, and most importantly, A FOREVER family. To date, 100% of the youth that graduate from our program exit the child welfare system through the vehicle of a permanent family. Often, this is through an "older child adoption", but also, has been wildly successful as a reunification with their family of origin.

House of Providence was born out of our two decades of our personal fostering and adoption journey. We have had many children in our home, including our two biological children, and we have adopted six, and have the privilege of having guardianship of one of our children, who is a cognitively impaired adult that we met when she was a foster child. This journey has given us a front row seat to watch the extreme suffering of the older youth who languish for years in our child welfare system, as the hopelessly wait to age-out. Often, the waiting is unbearable, and they become truant and AWOL from their placement. This leaves them extremely vulnerable to many social ills (including some of the worst, like homelessness, and human trafficking). We could not see this and do nothing. We could not unsee this. We quit our careers and sought to be an answer. As a result, House of Providence was born.

Situated in the city of Detroit, we are seeing miracles every day in our girls' home! We are excited to tell you that we are expanding! This is wonderful news, because the need is so great! We now have a boy's home in Holly, Michigan. Also, our property in Oxford, Michigan, the new construction for our second girls' home is underway! We successfully serve ten residents at a time. This allows for a familial setting and a therapeutic milieu. Warehousing children does not help! We must maintain a non-institutional setting, while serving the extreme needs that these children present with. This census of ten residents allows for just that, and should you choose to research our contractual outcomes, you will see that the data shows that our program is working!

As you carefully consider House Bill 6499, I would ask you to consider the ever-increasing number of children that are languishing in our foster care system. We are providing real answers that are releasing children from this system, and successfully engaging with the community to assist them in opening their homes to become a real part of the solution. This bill amends Michigan's Zoning Enabling Act to allow a child foster care home to house up to ten foster children on a rural parcel of 20 acres or more. On our campuses, where we have 20 plus acres, we are establishing a holistic,



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animal assisted, therapeutic campus where these children can come and heal. We are asking that we continue to successfully serve ten residents at a time, and not be restricted to the six residents' as is understandably necessary in densely populated neighborhoods.

In the state of Michigan, we are experiencing a crisis in the way of placements for foster youth, but especially for older, and profoundly traumatized foster youth. Because of the extremely limited placements for these foster youth, the state has had to utilize hotels and the like, as most of the shelters for minors remain at capacity. House Bill 6499 will help to alleviate the shortage of foster care placements while maintaining the status quo in residential neighborhoods. We welcome your support, so please join us in this fight for Michigan's future and Michigan's foster youth, because even foster youth are our future! Until every child has a home...

Sincerely,

Jason & Maggie Dunn